Strengthening the Interagency Process:
The Case for Enhancing the Role of the National Security Advisor

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Report Documentation Page

1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
25 AUG 2006		**00-08-2006 to 00-08-2006**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Strengthening the Interagency Process: The Case for Enhancing the Role of the National Security Advisor	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
Joint Forces Staff College,Joint and Combined Warfighting School,7800 Hampton Blvd,Norfolk,VA,23511-1701	

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE		**19**	
unclassified	**unclassified**	**unclassified**			

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the US invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003, several State Department and Department of Defense (DOD) agencies were frantically piecing together a detailed Phase IV (post-war) plan for Iraq. Unclear and ambiguous guidance from the National Security Council (NSC) forced State and DOD entities to conduct planning largely in isolation from one another, ultimately leading to a disjointed and stove-piped approach to reconstruction planning.[1] The lack of a coordinated Phase IV planning approach during the execution of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) highlights the need to expand the powers of the National Security Advisor. New congressional legislation should mandate the coordination of the security roles of all federal agencies in the U.S. Government under a Director for National Security to provide clear direction and focus for all pre- and post-war planning.

BACKGROUND

The lack of an effective NSC decision-making process continues to plague interagency coordination efforts during pre- and post-war planning. Lessons learned from OIF highlight the need to direct and integrate U.S. Government efforts similar to how the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act institutionalized joint operations for the military.[2] Reviewing the structure and roles of the NSC and National Security Advisor and their failure to properly arbitrate interagency disputes will identify some possible benefits of NSC reorganization legislation.

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[1] Donald R. Dreschler, "Reconstructing the Interagency Process after Iraq," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (February 2005): 5.

[2] Martin J. Gorman and Alexander Krongard, "A Goldwater-Nichols Act for the US Government: Institutionalizing the Interagency Process," *Joint Force Quarterly,* no. 39 (October 2006): 51.

<u>Structure of the NSC</u>

The National Security Act of 1947 created the NSC under the authority of the President, with the Vice President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense as its key members. In addition to these statutory members, the legislation also specified four additional members to include the Department of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board. [3]

In February 2001, President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 1 (NSPD-1), streamlining the membership and organizational structure of the NSC.   In addition to the statutory members, the Director of Central Intelligence (now the Director of National Intelligence) and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, as statutory advisers to the NSC are directed to attend all NSC meetings. Furthermore, the Chief of Staff to the President and the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy are invited to attend the meetings. The counsel to the President shall be consulted regarding the agenda of NSC meetings and shall attend any meeting when, in consultation with the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, he deems it appropriate. The heads of other Executive departments and agencies, senior officials, and the Attorney General, are invited to attend meetings of the NSC as required.[4]

NSPD-1 also established the NSC Principals Committee (NSC/PC) and Deputies Committee (NSC/DC) as senior interagency forums for consideration of policy issues affecting national security. The NSC/PC is chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and the NSC/DC is chaired by the Deputy National Security

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[3] The White House, National Security Council, *History of the National Security Council 1947-1997* [online document]; available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/history.html; Internet; accessed 29 July 2006.

[4] U.S. President, *National Security Presidential Directive-1*, (13 February 2001).

Advisor. A system of six regional NSC Policy Coordination Committees (NSC/PCCs) and eleven functional topic NSC/PCCs were also established with guidelines governing the operation, participation, decision-making path, and time frame for review of policy issues and action. The NSC/PCC's are chaired by an official of Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary rank.[5]

Role of the NSC

The primary role of the NSC is to align foreign and defense policy and to reconcile diplomacy, military commitments, and requirements. Since the passage of the National Security Act, Presidents have sought to use the NSC system to integrate foreign and defense policy in order to preserve the nation's security and advance its interests abroad.[6] Through a system of interagency working groups, deputies' committees, and principals' committees, the executive branch implements U.S. policy and vets decisions regarding military actions.

National Security Advisor

The National Security Act of 1947 established the position of the NSC "executive secretary" to facilitate the coordination of the principals, advisors, and professional staff. During the Eisenhower administration, the executive secretary became known as the "special assistant to the President for national security affairs," a job title better designating the person who would be the overall director of the NSC's activities. President Nixon later shortened the title to "the assistant for national security affairs," or as it is known today, the "National Security Advisor" (NSA).[7] The evolution of the role

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Johnson and Inderfuth, "The Evolving Role of the National Security Adviser: From Executive Secretary to Activist Counselor," White House Studies, (Summer 2004): 1

of the NSA has changed considerably from an envisioned policy "coordinator" to the primary advisor to the president on foreign policy issues. According to former adviser Samuel "Sandy" R. Berger of the Clinton administration, "the principal role of the advisor is to provide the President with information that he needs to know in addition to what he wants to know... and to keep the process moving in a direction that he wants it to move." Berger stressed that the purpose of the NSC (and, therefore, the NSA) lies in trying to have a coherent decision-making process in order to determine national security priorities and focus areas for the rest of the government.[8]

SHORTCOMINGS OF "THE INTERAGENCY" IN OIF

Events in Iraq in the time since the end of major combat operations bear the scars of the lack of interagency cooperation on the issue of post-OIF reconstruction and development across concept development, planning, and execution phases. The absence of unity of effort led to disconnected planning efforts prior to OIF and incoherent command and control (C2) arrangements during the early days of Phase IV. Examining specific disconnects and disputes among the various agencies of the executive branch regarding this issue, particularly between the Departments of State and Defense, illustrates the value of creating a permanent overarching interagency security structure, with statutory and budgetary authority, that can survive the transition between administrations and negotiate bureaucratic and personality obstacles.

Disunity of Effort

The concept of "the interagency" refers to the structures and processes that seek to create unity of effort among government entities with responsibilities for different elements of national power. Yet the first instructions from President Bush to Secretary of

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[8] Ibid., 3.

Defense Donald Rumsfeld regarding planning for regime change in Iraq undercut unity of effort, setting the stage for the ultimate failure of the interagency during Phase IV. By telling Rumsfeld: "Don't talk about what you are doing with others," Bush sidelined other agencies that have historically played a part in post-war operations, especially the State Department.[9] DOD was apparently more than willing to prepare for an invasion of Iraq in isolation from other agencies; early in President Bush's first term, DOD had defeated an NSC effort to mandate interagency cooperation during contingency planning, citing "preserving the freedom of action of Cabinet officers" as a reason.[10] These bureaucratic efforts, in combination with agency biases and growing antagonism between Secretary of State Colin Powell and senior DOD officials, created an environment where the effective combination of the elements of national power would become very difficult.

<u>Uncoordinated Planning and Ideological Differences</u>

Planning for a conflict in Iraq began at State in October 2001 and at CENTCOM in November of that year, but discussions between the two departments on the issue remained confined to the highest levels until early 2002.[11] True interagency coordination, generally assumed to take place at the NSC/PCC level and below, did not begin until July 2002, setting the stage for a classic stove-piped planning process. Prior to that date, the assumption at both State and DOD was that State had the lead for post-war planning.[12]

State's planning, begun shortly after the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001, focused on the "Future of Iraq Project," (FOI) which had, through interactions with Iraqi

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[9] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004): 3.
[10] Joseph J. Collins, "Planning Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq," *Joint Force Quarterly,* no. 41 (April 2006): 12.
[11] Drechsler, 5-7.
[12] Drechsler, 8.

exiles, developed several reports on the situation envisioned to arise after the fall of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The FOI reports addressed the need for a rapid transition toward self-governance, and dealt with issues such as security, health, and economics.[13] One of its main underlying assumptions, however, was there would not be an extended US occupation of Iraq.[14] These interagency efforts, while they involved DOD experts, were not seen by senior DOD personnel until August 2002, suggesting DOD was not aware of the FOI and its assumptions until then.[15]

Meanwhile, CENTCOM had been working on its own plan, OPLAN 1003, for Iraq, which was highly compartmentalized and thus not coordinated with State.[16] Planners at CENTCOM were preoccupied with the ground invasion and meeting the requirements set by Rumsfeld for troop numbers, and thus Phase IV was essentially neglected by DOD planners until late 2002. OPLAN 1003 included a Phase IV, as most plans do, but Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) officials mandated that State would be responsible for stability and reconstruction and therefore it was not comprehensive.[17]

These two stove-piped approaches collided in July 2002 as the formal interagency meetings began. During these interactions, it quickly became clear OSD was in charge, despite the legwork done by State. When responsibility for Phase IV was formally delineated by President Bush in October 2002, DOD was given the lead.[18] Without plans of its own, DOD turned to State's FOI, but upon examination, chose to ignore it.

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[13] David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2005): 37.
[14] Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory* (New York: Times Books, 2005): 27.
[15] Drechsler, 8.
[16] Woodward, 77.
[17] Drechsler, 7.
[18] Ibid., 18.

Explanations for this vary, but many commentators focus on ideological differences between State and DOD; one of DOD's biases was reportedly that State's "Arabists were not welcome because they did not think Iraq could be democratic."[19] Many of the State personnel involved in the FOI were essentially declared *personae non grata* by Secretary Rumsfeld, who believed its backers were not sufficiently dedicated to the cause of toppling Saddam,[20] or were tainted for not supporting exiled Iraqi figure Ahmed Chalabi (who had not been directly involved in the FOI).[21] Combined with the conclusion the FOI reports were not suitable for military use, this attitude ensured the FOI would not be used by DOD during Phase IV. According to one advisor to the FOI's Democratic Principles Working Group, "by February 2003, State and [DOD] officials were barely on speaking terms" due to the tensions and ideological bickering over the FOI and wider Iraq issues.[22] State input, therefore, was almost certainly minimal in the 300-page Phase IV operations order published by CENTCOM just before the start of hostilities.[23]

CENTCOM's Phase IV plans were to be executed by the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), the DOD entity created for post-war stabilization, set up in January 2003. State was likewise largely left out of this aspect of Phase IV due to the tensions described above. OSD instructed ORHA's chief, retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner, to ignore the FOI and also denied his request to hire thirty-two State experts, leaving him with virtually no State expertise during the three months between his appointment and when he deployed to the Middle East.[24]

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[19] Phillips, 128.
[20] Diamond, 27-30.
[21] Woodward, 283.
[22] Phillips, 128.
[23] Christopher M. Schnaubelt, "After the Fight: Interagency Operations," *Parameters* 35, no. 4 (2005-2006): 48.
[24] Phillips, 126-127.

<u>C2 Challenges</u>

The wholesale exclusion of State from the post-war planning effort can be partially blamed for C2 challenges that plagued ORHA and its successor organization, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Logical and efficient C2 arrangements are critical for creating and maintaining unity of effort, an axiom long understood by the US military. Joint Publication 0-2, the *Unified Action Armed Forces,* states "command and control is the most important function undertaken by a joint force commander."[25] The complex mix of tasks and organizations involved in post-war interagency efforts demands an even greater emphasis on C2 if a desired end-state is to be achieved. The relationship between the civilians running ORHA/CPA and the military in CJTF-7, the senior military headquarters in Iraq during the period 2003-2004, was never properly clarified. Despite the fact both organizations were headquartered in the same building, and both were DOD organizations, C2 deficiencies hindered their relationship from the beginning.

ORHA/CPA "essentially had to invent itself from scratch" and was not allowed to use lessons learned by State and the Agency for International Development as it built its C2 structure.[26] As a civilian entity with responsibilities for implementing multiple instruments of national power, one of its most important C2 tasks was to delineate the relationship between its civilian leadership and CJTF-7. At the most fundamental level, many were not sure who was in charge of the overall Phase IV effort: Ambassador L. Paul Bremer (Garner's successor) or the CJTF-7 commander. Military officers believed there was a clear division of labor between the military and civilian elements – CJTF-7

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[25] U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces,* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001): xiii.

[26] Phillips, 126.

handled all military efforts, for example – while civilians believed CPA led the entire effort. Such ambiguity led to "decisions…heavily influenced by turf considerations"[27] and conflicts where civilian and military sectors intersected, such as the integration of former militia members into new Iraqi security forces. The CPA directed slots be reserved for former militia into the new forces, but CJTF-7 officers resisted this requirement and were unclear as to who in CJTF-7 had approved the policy. With no order in writing from CJTF-7 mandating these quotas, some US military officers ignored the requirement, complicating later negotiations with militia leaders over the reintegration opportunities available to their men.[28]

C2 was further muddied by separate chains of command and differences in the level of access enjoyed by the CPA and CJTF-7 commanders. The CPA reported directly to Secretary Rumsfeld (and could work directly with the NSC), while CJTF-7 had to navigate its military chain which included CENTCOM and OSD.[29] These separate chains led to an imbalance of influence between the civilian and military elements of the post-war effort and may have led to situations where the CPA developed policy without CJTF-7 input. Furthermore, it likely reinforced a cultural division where actions were staffed much more informally by CPA employees than by the military. For example, in March 2004 the CPA wrote a draft policy for border control with no input from CJTF-7 because the CPA believed most of the policy involved it or the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, not CJTF-7. Upon seeing the proposed policy for the first time, CJTF-7's commander, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, decided to become more involved and began to run the border security question through the Military Decision-Making Process.

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[27] Schnaubelt, 50.
[28] Ibid., 51-52.
[29] Ibid., 51.

For its part, the CPA was eager to show it was accomplishing something and quickly became frustrated by CJTF-7's staffing procedures. From the CPA's point of view, the military planning process was long and unnecessary, and had the net effect of delaying the announcement of the new border security procedures by nine days.[30]

<u>Where was the NSC?</u>

The NSC is supposed to be the forum where interagency disputes are ironed out and clear direction for cooperation given. Yet Condoleezza Rice, the NSA during the planning and execution of OIF, remained on the sidelines throughout the deterioration of relations between State and DOD. Not until 2003, when Rice was named the head of the Iraq Stabilization Group, did she take on the coordination role (at least with respect to post-war Iraq) originally envisioned for her position.[31] Engagement and honest brokering at an earlier stage of Phase IV planning by Rice or the NSC staff may have identified the stove-piping and ideological fracturing before those problems grew unmanageable.

THE WAY AHEAD

The historical evidence in Iraq suggests "US government structures, programs and resource planning for S&R (Stability and Reconstruction) in Iraq fell manifestly short, including failure of the interagency process for policy-making, inadequate planning, serious underestimation of costs and requirements (both military and civilian)…."[32] Pundits such as David Phillips, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, assert "the most important lesson is that, subsequent to regime change, you had better have a plan for winning the peace…The planning that was under way, as we have seen

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[30] Ibid., 53-54.
[31] Phillips, 168.
[32] Ellen Laipson and Maureen S. Steinbruner, *Iraq and America: Choices and Consequences*, (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2006): 137.

day to day, has been grossly deficient."[33] The general consensus within the public and the media blamed the apparent failure of the S&R planning for Iraq on the lack of planning: however, this failure of the interagency process did not center on the lack of available information or planning efforts within individual federal agencies. Phillips' observations and those of his like-minded colleagues fail to acknowledge the extensive body of information collected and planning conducted with respect to Phase IV operations in Iraq. James Fallows in *The Atlantic Monthly* points out "Even now the collective efforts at planning by the CIA, the State Department, the Army and the Marine Corps, the United States Agency for International Development and a wide variety of other groups inside and outside the government are under appreciated by the public."[34] The U.S. press paid little attention to the planning efforts such as State's FOI until after the difficulties in Phase IV of the Iraqi operation began to emerge.[35] Obviously, a great deal of information and planning occurred prior to the commencement of OIF.

Given the preponderance of information available to the DOD and the substantial singular planning efforts applied to Phase IV by individual agencies, the problems resulting in the aforementioned shortcomings in the overall Phase IV planning reside in the integration and synthesis of the available information and individual agency plans into one coherent and robust national plan for the stabilization and reconstruction of post-conflict Iraq. The Administration's most recent response to this challenge has been to assign the State Department overall agency responsibility for US stabilization and reconstruction assistance to other nations and regions at risk. On 7 December 2005,

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[33] David Phillips, edited transcript of remarks, 27 April 2005, Carnegie Council Books for Breakfast (New York: Merrill House, 2005).
[34] James Fallows, "Blind Into Baghdad," *The Atlantic Monthly* 293, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2004): 54.
[35] Ibid.

President Bush issued a Presidential Directive empowering the Secretary of State to

improve the coordination, planning, and implementation of reconstruction and

stabilization efforts in the hope such action will aid foreign governments to exercise

sovereignty over their own territories and prevent terrorists from using those regions at

risk of collapse as safe havens.[36]   This directive establishes the State Department as the

US focal point for coordinating and leading the integrated capabilities of the US

Departments and Agencies with the relevant capabilities to plan and execute S&R

activities abroad.[37] With respect to DOD, the State Department will coordinate such

efforts with the DOD to ensure the requisite "harmonization" of S&R requirements with

planned or ongoing US military operations.

Although admirable in its attempt, the Administration's solution to the

shortcomings inherent in the current interagency process as demonstrated by the US

failure to properly plan and execute Phase IV in Iraq is inadequate to the task at hand.

The State Department is woefully undermanned at approximately 30,000 personnel and is

only resourced at $9 billion in annual funding to spearhead the nation's S&R missions in

the future.[38] Nor does the State Department possess the necessary authority to hold all

relevant Agencies' "feet to the fire" when S&R activities demand interagency

contributions to both resources and planning requirements. Additionally, conflict

resolution between agencies remains an issue not addressed in the President's directive.

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[36] The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Statement of Presidential Directive on US Efforts For Reconstruction and Stabilization, 14 December 2005,* [online document]; available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/12/20051214.html; Internet; accessed 10 August 2006.
[37] Ibid.
[38] U.S. Department of State, *The Budget In Brief for Fiscal Year 2007,* [on-line document]; available from http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/60410.pdf; Internet; accessed 10 August 2006.

In order to address this shortfall in the interagency process and avoid future debacles with respect to planning for S&R missions and other contingencies with national security ramifications, we recommend enacting legislation that would vest in one single entity within the executive branch the necessary authority over agencies in matters concerning national security and the required budget resources to effectively integrate the individual capabilities of our federal agencies to the conduct of missions across the full spectrum of conflict.

We envision modification of Title 50 United States Code (USC) Section 402, the legislation governing the NSC to include the designation of the NSA as the National Security Director (NSD) and elevating that person to permanent membership to the NSC. The proposed legislation would have the President appoint the NSD with the consent of the Senate in the same manner as the other senior cabinet positions and would assign the NSD the overall responsibility of ensuring the proper integration and application of all executive branch capabilities resident within the individual federal agencies toward the attainment of our national security objectives. In matters limited specifically to national security and as directed by the President, the NSD would have the responsibility and authority to coordinate and direct the activities of individual agencies pertinent to the pursuit of our national security objectives. This authority would include the tasking of agencies to participate in the development of plans, provision of resources and execution of future operations that encompass the entire range of military operations and other missions related to national security. Thus empowered, the NSD would be able to ensure all the assets available to the Administration could be harnessed and directed effectively toward the attainment of our national interests abroad. With respect to Phase IV planning

for Iraq, the NSD would require and oversee the active involvement of and coordination among DOD, DOS, CIA, USAID and the other relevant agencies in the planning and execution of the S&R activities in Iraq thereby improving our chances of success in establishing a sovereign and stable government in Iraq. To facilitate this process for Iraq and to improve the chances of success in future crises overseas, new legislation should establish a "Committee on Foreign Contingency Plans" charged with directing and coordinating the U.S. Government's instruments of national power in regard to the planning and execution of contingency operations requiring interagency involvement. This committee would be chaired by the NSD and include the following members: Director of National Intelligence; Secretaries of Defense, State, and Treasury; the Attorney General; and other members as the President may designate.

To create and foster a culture of cooperation among the agencies, the NSD would conduct training exercises to develop and maintain interagency competency in planning, resourcing, implementing, and executing contingency operations.   This mandatory training would increase the effectiveness of interagency performance in future operations as agencies increase their knowledge of other agencies' capabilities and limitations and develop relationships with other agencies at every level within and between the agencies. Beyond the adoption of the recommended legislation proposal, Congress would need to appropriate adequate funding for the increased resource requirements associated with the performance of the expanded duties of the NSD and the supporting staff functions. Training and oversight of the interagency process with respect to security matters requires significant increases in personnel, equipment, training, and most likely, infrastructure. These funding requirements would pale in comparison to the costs borne

by US taxpayers as a result of poor planning and execution of security operations abroad. One only needs to look at the staggering costs of our operations in Iraq to see the value of our recommended investment in the NSD with respect to the additional funding for the proposed NSD.

Congress would also need to provide legislative oversight of the activities and performance of the NSD and could accomplish this through the budget process and implementation of reporting requirements to Congress in matters concerning national security. The establishment of an NSD would provide the public with an accountable entity within the Administration to answer for all the failures of our national security policy.

CONCLUSION

No one starts a war-or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so-without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.

Karl von Clausewitz, On War[39]

Clausewitz advises that national leadership should not only clearly identify the objectives of our military operations but also thoroughly plan those operations. Phase IV of OIF clearly lacked the requisite interagency planning necessary to ensure success in establishing a stable and democratic society in post-Saddam Iraq and highlighted the need for change in the national apparatus responsible for securing U.S. national interests abroad. Adoption of new congressional legislation mandating the coordination of the security roles of all federal agencies under the DNS would create the planning mechanism and collaborative environment essential to successful integration of all the capabilities inherent to the executive branch and attainment of our nation's security.

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[39] Karl Von Clausewitz, *On War,* Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.; Princeton Univ. Press, 1989): 579.

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